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ABSTRACT

A project investigated the factors that influence the academic and vocational development of African-American and Hispanic youth. Data were collected via a questionnaire and structured interviews from 36 college juniors and seniors. Twenty-eight were female, of whom 18 were African-American and 10 were Latino. Six Latino and two African-American males also participated. All subjects earned above average grades, aspired to earn at least a bachelor's degree, and had made a vocational decision. The study identified six influences: (1) participants had a high level of internal control over their vocational choices; (2) participants were confident of their academic ability, even when that confidence was not matched by performance; (3) many had a special personal and academic relationship with a teacher in their high school; (4) most made their vocational choice by middle school or junior high; (5) their models for vocational choices were real as well as fictional people in the media, especially television; and (6) parental influence (considered by most to have had the major role in their development) was through modeling a work ethic, being generally supportive, and communicating expectations for achievement. Participants suggested that their peers who had less well-developed vocational plans and aspirations could be helped by the following: (1) teachers who have higher expectations; (2) more academic and vocational counseling; (3) more courses relevant to their needs, interests, and backgrounds; and (4) more racial, ethnic, and same-sex role models in work settings and instructional materials. (Contains 15 references.) (CML)

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO YOUTH

Supported by
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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO YOUTH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments i

Introduction 1

The Participants and Procedures 2

The Significance of the Project 3

Interview Data 4

Conclusions and Implications for Formal and Informal Education 15

References 19

INTRODUCTION

It is nationally known that compared to non-minority students, African-American and Latino students achieve less well in school, attend college less frequently, and have higher unemployment rates (Malveaux, 1989; Oakes, 1988). There tends to be a relationship between success in school and employability and between school achievement and the vocation that one is able to assume.

This project focuses on the academic and vocational development of thirty-six African American and Latino youth with particular emphasis on the socialization of these youths' academic and vocational attitudes, values, and behaviors. Recognizing that the social context in which learning takes place includes schools, family, and community settings, the intended outcome of this project is to identify factors which can be replicated in these setting to enhance the development of other minority youth.

Data for this project was collected from thirty-six junior- and senior-level college and university students. Twenty-eight of the participants were female of which eighteen were African American and ten were Latino. Of the eight males who participated, two were African American and six were Latino. Twenty-five of the participants were from two-parent households and eleven were from single-parent households. Either one or both of the parents of eighteen participants had some college education and eighteen reported that their parents' educational levels ranged from none to high school. Other characteristics that these students had in common were that they earned better than average grades; aspired to earn at least a bachelor's degree; had made a vocational decision; and showed some evidence of being able to make the transition from school to work.

This project was guided by the following questions:

1. What factors have contributed to the students' academic and vocational development?

2. What are the implications for helping other minority students with their academic and vocational development?

The Participants and Procedures

The thirty-six undergraduate minority students who voluntarily provided data for this project were among the one-hundred twenty high achieving students enrolled in a summer research mentoring program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During the academic year, however, they matriculated at several different institutions located across the nation. The students were chosen to participate in this program because they showed some interest in graduate study, earned a B or better college grade-point average, and had identified and acted on their vocational plans. Eight of them were enrolled in historically African-American institutions, and twenty-eight at a large, predominately white research institution. A majority of them grew up and attended school in urban centers in the north and the rest in the rural south and southwest. Their vocational plans represented a wide variety of occupational areas including teaching, engineering, business, journalism, science, medicine, law, psychology, and agriculture.

Data was collected via a written questionnaire and structured interviews. Extant data was taken from the application form for the summer program in which they were enrolled.

A structured interview was conducted with the students to ascertain information about their academic and vocational development. Interviewing and analyzing the content of the transcripts around themes were the primary procedures used in this project (Van Manen, 1990). The questions were instrumental in determining the themes that were embodied in the texts of the interviews. The interview questionnaire consisted of seventeen questions designed to provide data that when analyzed would answer the two questions stated in the introduction. The seventeen questions on the questionnaire are based on factors which have been determined to influence academic and vocational development. Factors included were formal and informal educational experiences (vocational and academic); vocational exploration, aspirations, and expectations; influence of teachers, mentors, and significant others; work experience; and opportunity to succeed. These variables were identified in research on effective schools (Edmonds, 1986); school experience (Boykin, 1986); opportunity structure and effort optimism (Ogbu, 1986); achievement orientation (Scanzoni, 1985); teacher and student attitudes and behaviors (Murray & Fairchild, 1989), and career choice and development (Brown, 1990a, 1990b; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990).

The Significance of the Project

A large portion of the existing body of research on the academic and vocational development and behavior of minority youth has been criticized because the theories and concepts on which it is based were derived from studies of middle-class whites (Brown & Brooks, 1990). Some critics argue that to understand the development of minority youth, research must be considered within their cultural context and that attention be given to the variations in the subjective experience which influence them (Baly, 1989).

Brown and Brooks (1990) identified another issue related to research on career development that they labeled "logical positivism versus phenomenology as the basis for theory and research" (p. 516). These authors acknowledged the phenomenological approach as a means to uncover patterns, tendencies, and meaning of career action. Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990) believe what is missing from much of the literature on career decision-making is the "essence of the individual's life processes in career development" (p. 308). They advocated emphasis on such variables as choice and continued self-exploration.

A phenomenological approach was used in this project. More precisely, the approach used was hermeneutic phenomenology (Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, & Mulderij, 1985). Phenomenological research is the study of the lived world; therefore, it does not yield theory which can explain or control the world, but it does offer plausible insights into the world of human beings (Van Manen, 1990).

This project is significant because the students themselves were asked to recall ordinary everyday experiences, examine their meaning, and reflect on impact of these experiences on their personal development. They were also given the opportunity to say what they would have done differently if given a chance, and to speculate about how their life experiences are different from their early school and community cohorts who have not developed as successfully as they. Frequently, students said that the interview had caused them to think about things that they had not thought about recently and in ways they had never thought about them. For many, the interview was a learning process as they realized that life experiences which they had taken for granted were not common among many of their age and race cohorts.

Insight into the meaning and attribution that students attach to the events in their lives should have considerable value to educators, parents, and others interested in their development. In an educational setting, such understanding has implications for teacher behavior and instructional content.

INTERVIEW DATA

In the structured interview, each participant was asked to respond to seventeen questions. The seventeen questions elicited information used to answer the questions that are the focus of this project. Selected responses will be reported in this section for each of the interview questions. These responses were chosen because they articulate the themes reported in the conclusions.

Question #1. How did you become interested in your chosen vocation?

This question sought information about whether the students perceived the decision to have been made by themselves or someone other than themselves. One-half of the students felt that they had made the decision themselves and that it had been based on knowledge of self (i.e., ability, interest, control of destiny).

> Oh yes, I definitely had the say. I really had no direction. I made the decision myself.

> I've always had an interest in the business world. Just watching TV or from what I read, I've always had an interest in it. Since I was a little kid, I liked the concept of making deals with people.

> I always liked math and when I got to high school I took some accounting classes and I felt that I liked it a lot and I did well in it, so I decided to choose that as my major.

One-half of the respondents attributed their vocational choices to factors external to themselves. The most commonly cited factors were parents, teachers, special programs, special events involving family, direct or indirect experience with work and lack of alternatives.

An example of a respondent who lacked an alternative follows:

> . . . when I looked down the list of majors I felt like none of them fitted me except nutrition. I mean the only thing that I was interested in was interior design and the school I looked at did not offer that. So I said, well let me pick something else . . . because I think I will like going to this institution.

The following are examples of the influence of parents and family members in the vocational decision:

> I think the major factor was my parents, well my mom. My dad is deceased, so pretty much my mom.

> I am interested in becoming a lawyer, something in the legal system. I think I got interested through my mother. She used to study law when she was living in Mexico. It was something she really enjoyed and we used to talk about it often.

> Well I guess my father. He has always been someone who worked for himself. He had his own refrigeration business as well as his own farm. He worked very hard, very long hours, but I never saw him being given orders on a job. I guess that may have been like a role model which I decided to follow.

> My aunt was a special education teacher. I spent a week with her in Mississippi and went to class with her every day. She had the real multiple and severe retardation students and my uncle did more like the learning disabilities. I thought it was really interesting and when I got a scholarship, I started looking at special education. . . . This is what I want to do because she was fascinated with the experience of teaching retarded students.

> In my school, most of the children in special education are Afro-Americans. I think they need a special role model in special education, so I will do that for a few years. Then I want to become a superintendent or principal of a school so I can implement changes within a school.

Teacher and counselor influence is revealed in the following comments by students who said that they knew they had some ability but needed someone to guide them:

> My math teacher got me interested because she saw that I had skill in mathematics and stuff like that.

> My eighth grade teacher just opened up doors for me.

> The counselors saw my grades were high and they advised me to consider engineering and that prompted me to do so.

Examples of the influence of work experience are revealed in the following responses:

> While I was in high school I worked at Carson Pirie Scott in Chicago and really enjoyed the work. I have also had internships in retail so I guess those influenced my decision.
>
> The biggest thing that helped was working. I think I've learned more from this company than I've learned in my books because textbooks are usually theoretical; my experience in the real world is real.

Question #2. Were there any specific events that influenced your vocational decision?

The respondents were asked to recall critical events that they felt had some influence on their decisions. While only a few student could recall specific events, some of those were especially poignant. Here are two examples:

> When I was in fourth grade, my grandmother went into an instant coma. She wasn't a healthy woman. She died a month later of something called cerebral hemorrhage. She had high blood pressure like most blacks and she had a heart problem as well. When I was in the fourth grade, I decided to become a doctor.
>
> When I was younger, my father was put on trial. I attended it and since then have wanted to be a lawyer.

Question #3. When did you start thinking about attending college or choosing a vocation?

This question was designed to get the respondents to think about when the vocational development process began because subsequent questions focus on action taken based on the decision. Most of the respondents first started to think about vocations at age thirteen around grade eight, some while in high school, then elementary school, and a few could not recall:

> Before I started high school, maybe I was thirteen years old.
>
> It was in junior high school I was really good in chemistry and I wanted to go into chemical engineering. I had a friend who was older than me and he was thinking about it too.
>
> I was in the third grade when I decided that I want to be a medical doctor.

Question #4. Who did you talk to about your plans?

This question stimulated discussion about who the respondents talked to, whether they initiated the discussions, and how helpful they were. A majority of the respondents talked to no one, and the others talked to counselors and teachers, parents or family, or business people, in that order. Among those who talked to someone, the respondents were just as likely to initiate the conversation as not. Typical responses are as follows:

> I didn't talk to anyone.

> No, it was completely personal. I never talked; I don't even know anyone who is a lawyer.

> I talked to my counselor and my accounting teacher. They were positive. . . . They saw that I was doing very well in accounting class, that I liked it and I knew a lot about it.

Question #5. Were there specific programs in your school or community that helped you decide on a vocation?

This question elicited discussion about the informal role that school and community agencies played in the respondents' development. A majority of the respondents indicated that there were no specific programs in their school or community which helped them. Typical responses were the following:

> No, I don't think so.

> No. In high school there wasn't anything geared towards career choosing or anything like that. It was very "you were on your own type of atmosphere." And it was not until I went to junior college that I got individualized attention or help.

A few respondents credited school, community, and church programs with helping them. In those instances, the recognition was very positive:

> Well in high school I took business courses and that really gave me an interest for it. I took business law and an economics class in high school and I figured that I'd take them here too and have enjoyed them.

> At school I guess I was "special" or something and a lot of times they would just help me out because they felt that I had the talent to go somewhere. . . . As for my own initiative it was just making sure that I did not screw up the opportunities that I already had and trying to open some new avenues for myself after high school.

There was a program in grammar school where professionals came and talked to students about their careers. An accounting executive came and talked to the students about what he did. He kept track of financial records and created financial statements. It sounded interesting.

Church definitely. I was brought up in a Christian household and they instilled in me the value that not only to want to work hard but it's just there are certain things that are in school and out of school, whatever, that can get you in trouble no matter how smart you are and just make you go by the wayside. With my Christian upbringing, I tended to avoid that and that was very beneficial for me to be where I am now.

Question #6. Which individuals were especially helpful to you?

Most of the respondents indicated having been helped, directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, by teachers and parents. Most often, responses focused on qualities of the helper rather than overt acts:

My algebra teacher. We didn't talk about it that much when it came down to picking a school and stuff. I'm in engineering and his son had come to this school in engineering and it was something that he was really proud of and he thought it was a good program. When I talked to him about it, he was real supportive. It was more the teacher than the class. He was just a good guy personally, more than in the classroom.

My dad, he always said I could do what I wanted to do and he never accepted anything less than my best effort.

Question #7. Who had the most influence on your plans?

This question evoked discussion about individuals and the way influence was manifested. A majority of the respondents were influenced by their parents, teachers, family, and professionals in that order. Mothers were cited more frequently than fathers. A small number of the respondents reported no one had influenced their plans. Some typical responses were as follows:

I can't think of anyone else beside my mom.

My mother pushed me to do things that I want to do. When I told her about my decision, she was right beside me all the way, and she encouraged me to study and look into what I want to be.

My mother because she was 100% behind me.

Well in a way I guess my dad did because he is a factory worker and since I was a little kid, I've noticed that he works every single day. He probably

works harder than people that make more than him. I've talked about it with him and he kind of scared me into making sure that I'm in college.

My eighth grade teacher and my mom. But I would say that my eighth grade teacher was probably the most influential person.

A teacher who once said to me, "You are a gifted child."

Question #8. Did you find high school subjects useful in planning your vocation? and Question #9. Have college subjects been useful in planning your vocation?

These two questions were combined because students talked about college subjects even before they were asked the question. These questions were designed to elicit information about the usefulness of formal instruction in academic or vocational subjects in planning for a vocation.

The respondents were about evenly divided about the usefulness of subjects. Some indicated that a broad range of subjects including math, English, science, history, and sociology were useful. Others could not think of any courses which had been useful. In many cases, the relationship with the teacher was as important if not more important than the subject. Here are some illustrative responses:

To be honest, there was only one subject that I really enjoyed. It was a subject not taught in most high schools, sociology. I interacted with the teacher out of class and we didn't use regular textbooks.

High school subjects were helpful for my writing skills, math skills, and that. But as far as deciding what I wanted to pursue as a career, no. There was not any real guidance or counselors who said, let's sit down and talk about your future, what do you want to do.

What I can say is that we had a wide variety of subjects that we did. But to be quite honest, I don't think my school did a good job of introducing me to careers, vocations, and things like that.

No, not at all. Nothing I took in high school really had a great impact.

Question #10. Did you have a choice in which vocation to choose?

A vast majority of the respondents indicated that they had a choice in vocation; however, most said that they had no choice about going to college nor ever not wanting to go to college even though many had never told anybody about the desire to go:

I think I had the choice, but I never wanted anything besides to go to college.

Yeah, I think I always had a choice.

Question #11. Did you receive the grades you expected? Did you perform as well as you would have liked?; Question #12. What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?; and Question #13. What does it take for you to get these grades?

These questions elicited discussion about the interrelationships among aspiration, effort, and achievement, with grades as an indicator. Over one-half of the respondents indicated that they had received the grades they expected and that their performance had correlated with their expectations. Most indicated confidence in their ability to do well; however, many said that they had not put forth much effort. Failure to get grades for which some aspired was attributed to lack of effort, self-discipline, and poor time management. A sampling of their responses follow:

Grades are pretty important and for the most part, I've done what I expected.

I always thought that I had the ability to learn anything I wanted to learn.

I think I would have done better if the faculty had pushed and I had been made to realize my potential and creativity. That's a problem that plagues African Americans in urban schools and a lot of other places. Just because of their attitude that we can't excel, they expect less and of course you only do what you're expected in most cases.

I don't think I'm working to my full potential. Every semester there is one class with a C. Of course I can do better than a C but I get lazy.

I don't ever go for straight A's because that is too much pressure.

Not really. I was never a straight A student. I could have done better; I never really worked at it. Well, I've always expected to receive As, but, you know how you take a course, go back and say, okay, I got a B out of this course, but I know had I started earlier or worked harder, I could have made an A.

No. Actually, throughout high school I was always an average student because I have a habit of not working as hard as I should work. Now professors always consider me a good student, but I know I don't put as much into my work as I probably should.

Question #14. What would you do differently?

This question required the respondents to reflect on their pasts and the choices they had made. They were prompted with the question, "If you had a second chance to relive your life, what things would you do differently?" All but one respondent would have done something differently including take different courses, study more frequently and effectively, manage time better, attend different high schools, involve parents, and do extracurricular activities:

> Oh, one of the first things is I would drag my parents to high school to the P.T.A. meetings. I didn't know that . . . there are like three levels in almost every high school, and they section people into them. I found out that parents could have forced administration or teachers to place me in a higher level because I lost a lot of information, very valuable information for that.
>
> I'm not good at time management. I think I would work on that during high school.
>
> I would have taken more advanced classes.
>
> I think I would take classes that they didn't allow me to take, typing and computers.
>
> I would have a better attitude. I think that more than anything, I wouldn't be so preoccupied with whatever grades I did want to get . . . and I would really realize that there's more to life than just book knowledge.
>
> Well, I would put greater emphasis on studying. I would change my attitude towards school work because at that point it had no relevance to me. I didn't decide what I wanted to do until my senior year so up to that point doing work had no relevance.
>
> In high school, I was very happy. I was involved in the yearbook, the newspaper, the honor society, and things like that. I went to a private school so the education was good. I liked my high school days. I wish I could go back.

Question #15. Do you feel confident about your success in your chosen vocation? **and** ***Question #16. What do you think are your chances of finding a job in this area?***

The respondents were making good progress toward the completion of bachelors' degrees and many planned to obtain white-collar professional vocations. However, their level of confidence about achieving their plans ranged from very confident to not confident with most being confident:

Yes, I think I will. I just know that you can do anything that you put your mind to because in the last two years, I've done a lot of things that I thought I'd never be able to do. It is a matter of having confidence and I think I'm an intelligent person. I can do it.

Yes, yes. I have that burning desire to succeed and I will.

I believe that I will be successful . . . I have a strong spiritual belief in God of course, and there is nothing in this world that I believe that I cannot do if I put my mind to it. If you believe it, you can achieve it. I've taken those things to heart.

I feel as though I have to. I feel I reached a low, and I have nowhere to go but up. I feel I have to make a career and I guess I am very determined right now.

I hope so. I think so. Not really . . . the algebra teacher told me if you stay in engineering and graduate, you are more likely to get a job than a lot of other people because you are a woman and Hispanic. I think that will be the biggest fear, getting a job. Once I get started in a career, I feel I will do fine at it.

The field I want to go into is very white male dominated. You are not going to see many black females in my field so I am sort of getting used to that. I work with a graduate assistant who is black male and he tells me about the "old boy" network. I guess I could succeed, it depends.

Question #17. What is the difference between you and someone similar to you who does not have the same accomplishments? What can be done to help students who seem to lack vocational direction?

According to Green (1989), "Among 1980 high school seniors who enrolled in college, 21 percent of the white students, compared with 10 percent of the black students and 7 percent of the Hispanic students, earned a bachelor's degree of higher degree by spring 1986" (p. 3). Minority youth who are enrolled in colleges and universities and doing well academically represent a very small percent of their age and race cohorts. Many people who enrolled in kindergarten at the same time of the respondents have either dropped out, done poorly academically even if they graduated, or gone directly from high school into the labor force. Respondents could readily identify people—former school mates, relatives, and even siblings—who fit this description, and who they thought were as capable as they academically. They emphasized the need for strong self-esteem, self-confidence, personal motivation, willingness to persevere, role models, determination, willingness to break with family history of dependence, control of personal destiny, parent and family support, and information about the world of work and vocations:

I can think of a few that didn't do very well in school. It tended to be people who had problems in terms of family structure. People who grew up with grandmothers because their parents were somewhere else. I think just seeing my dad and my mother get up and go to work every day was very important. I think basically I can say I had good mentors. I worked at a bank and if I decided not to go to work, my dad would ask why. I had to be sick not to go. If I was sick and felt better around noon, he would say why don't you go on now and stay a little later. His mentality rubbed off on me. Some people don't have that in their family structure at home.

I would basically say I am probably more focused on what I want to do, a little more determined. With the other person, I guess the want could be there, but I don't see the focus in that person. . . . He or she needs a little direction.

I think that I am a lot more responsible and independent than most people. I am completely independent financially and every other way. That has been a big asset for me.

It would have to be motivation, determination, and taking time to study. I set my goals early; I was like fifth grade.

I wish they (the peers) had a good role model or something they're interested in. For me, it was my father who taught me to be a success and I think having someone to look up to in the years of growing up will help you.

. . . Society has a tendency to go in the direction that the media go—the different images of us and images of violence and demoralization in general . . . It gets in your mind and whether or not you constantly think about it, it still gets in there. The school system has to be structured in a way where people are actually interested in class. As a black person, I can't imagine just wanting to sit around all day and hear about how great white people are. If you are not getting what you want out of school, what's left but to be social.

. . . his family was bad and he really didn't have any guidance. He needed to be guided early in grammar school because he turned bad when he was in grammar school. The family structure was broken. He didn't have someone positive around him to really guide him early. I think past high school is almost impossible because they get set in their ways and in gangs and it's very hard to get out.

I guess support from our peers and family.

It would depend on their motivation, background and if their parents are behind them. It could be that they are trying very, very hard but they don't have the help that they need.

Think the most important thing is our role models . . . see people succeeding in things because a lot of times it doesn't come in the home.

It's just important to have goals. I know a lot of people who don't know what they want to do and it's hard to get really motivated if you don't know where you're going.

Respondents' suggestions of ways to help people who lack direction follow:

I think the high schools and counselors were focused on people who are going to college and helping them out. Our counselors had a mind set as to who needed college applications, scholarships, and other counseling. As far as I know, they were not real concerned about how they could help other students. Maybe schools should get more counselors or some specifically for those not going to college.

Some people need others to advise them about the importance of working hard consistently and setting achievable goals.

Advise students at an early age and expose them to different career options before they get to high school.

Work experience while still in high school will help.

Anybody who has succeeded without a college degree could come to school and talk to give options for students because right now only certain information is given out for college-oriented students.

Right now, all programs are geared toward being a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. However, we also need a lot of other things too. Cover the entire spectrum of work instead of just how much I can get paid.

Teachers have the power to place you in whatever program they want you to be placed in and if they place you in a lower program, then you are stuck there. Teacher expectations for Hispanics are not as high as they should be.

Instructors have to go out on a limb, especially if they see potential in that person. I think if you choose to teach, you have the responsibility to help bring out the potential in people.

The only thing I can think of is to give people more self-confidence because when you get a bad one, you think you are worthless. That is why people limit themselves as to what they can do. They think they are not worthy. That was my problem in high school.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

This project was designed to identify factors that influence the academic and vocational development of African American and Hispanic youth. Increased knowledge of these factors can be used by educators, parents, and community leaders to develop programs, instructional strategies, and student services to enhance the development of an increased number of minority students.

Respondents reported a range of factors to which they attributed their vocational choice and development. Most of them indicated a high level of internal control over their vocational choice, which means that they attribute their decisions and actions to themselves and assume personal responsibility for them. Very few indicated that there was a high degree of external control in their choices, meaning that decisions were based on luck, fate, parents, or other external forces.

The respondents expressed confidence in their academic ability; however, frequently their perceptions of their academic ability were not consistent with the level of their performance. Many of the respondents reported that they did not work up to their ability. In such cases, they attributed this to lack of motivation and self-discipline, involvement in extracurricular activities, not wanting to put themselves under too much pressure to achieve at a higher level, lack of feeling pushed by teachers, and not interested in subjects. Several students said they were more motivated to achieve up to their potential when their friends were doing likewise, especially when they were in the same classroom or work group.

Many of the respondents reported having knowledge of their academic ability only because of the grades they earned, the track in which they were placed in school, or because a teacher or counselor told them. They tended not to realize their ability until somebody pointed it out to them.

Many of the students reported having a special relationship with a teacher in their high school. These relationships tended to be personal and academic as indicated by statements such as he or she is a good person; however, the relationships tended to validate that they were good students. For example, one student indicated that he knew he was

special because of the way he was treated at school, and he tried not to do anything academically or behaviorally to jeopardize his status.

Vocational choice was reportedly made early in the life of respondents, some as early as grade school, a majority by middle school/junior high school, and a small number in high school. Models for their choices were real people as well as fictional people in the media, especially television. A few reported acquiring knowledge about vocations from newspaper accounts of peoples' careers and reports of occupational forecasting. The real people tended to be family members who did not live in the household, people they had encountered through school programs and classes, and people they had encountered through some form of work experience. Parents tended to influence choice through modeling a work ethic, being generally supportive, and communicating expectations for achievement. Since these means of acquiring information were successful for these students, their use is advocated in similar situations. Most respondents revealed that once they had made a tentative decision, they did not discuss it with anyone or make their aspirations known. It is conceivable that students could have received help and encouragement had they done so. When teachers know their students' career goals, they can use the information as a basis for selecting new group and individual learning experiences, to illustrate relationships that may exist between career goals and class content, and to help students understand the relationship between academic and career success. Students may be more highly motivated to achieve and have greater confidence in their ability to achieve their goals when teachers give tacit approval of them.

The respondents had some observations, beliefs, and judgments about race, age, and school cohorts who had less well-developed vocational plans and aspirations than they. Compared to themselves, they considered them to lack motivation, interest, parental support and family structure, opportunity to succeed, willingness to put academic needs over social needs, role models, information about the world of work, teacher/peer/family or other support networks, study skills/strategies/habits, and maturity. They were not aware of many programs or services in their schools or communities for such students, but had ideas about what could be done to make a difference. They suggested that teachers extend themselves more and have higher expectations, more academic and vocational counseling, more programs and courses relevant to their needs, interests, and backgrounds for these students.

Responses indicated that they perceived students who do not do well academically to need ethnic, racial, and same sex vocational role models in their instructional materials, work settings, and other learning experiences. They said that they need to be exposed to people in a variety of vocations for which the educational requirements range from high school diploma to college degree, and that they be presented as options—not vocational hierarchies. They reported that tracking and experiencing some academic failure in school fosters feelings of worthlessness; therefore, the few respondents who reported having felt worthless advocated greater student choice in the selection of programs and courses.

A majority of the respondents attributed a major role in their development to their family, especially a parent or parents. Primarily parents were the ones to set standards, communicate expectations, and model certain work ethics. Schools that involve parents in making and implementing the academic decisions of their children are likely to foster a higher level of development than those that do not.

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